



NEW *release*

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RV AND CAMPGROUND INDUSTRIES ANTICIPATE STRONG FALL AND WINTER

RESTON, Va. -- The recreation vehicle industry kept pace with last year's strong performance through the first half of 1996 and observers expect shipments to dealers and rentals to accelerate ahead of 1995 in the second half of this year.

The RV industry continues to expand, with last year's shipments to dealers topped only by the deliveries in 1994, which were the highest since 1978. Now it looks like 1996 will finish ahead of last year's rate, continuing a run of strong sales years that have seen wholesale shipments jump 50 percent in recent years.

Based on a forecast for RVIA by DeWolf Associates, 1996 shipments of motorhomes, van campers, travel trailers, folding camping trailers, truck campers and conversion vehicles should reach 490,400 units, a 3 percent improvement over 1995's strong showing.

"This will be another busy fall and winter RV travel season," said RVIA President David Humphreys. "The economy continues to be solid and the RV market is pulling ahead of last year. More people are realizing that their RV can serve as a home away from home for travel year round."

Rentals are also expected to rise, topping last year's pace by 20 percent, according to Bob Caldarone, vice president of marketing for Cruise America, the nation's largest RV rental company. "The fall looks about the same, up about 20 percent over last year," he said.

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RECREATION VEHICLE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

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"Our fall business looks pretty darn good," Caldarone added. "September has been an absolute boomer for us." Cruise America's September rentals were higher than June for the second year in a row, he said. Customers are taking advantage of off-season rates at their destinations and lower airfares in September, Caldarone said.

The summer finished with a good Labor Day weekend at Kampgrounds of America Inc. (KOA) and that is expected to carry on into the fall, said Kent Zimmerman, senior vice president. "The KOA system had a strong Labor Day weekend and has enjoyed excellent response to our new toll-free direct-to-campground reservation phone number system," he said. "I've spoken with KOA owners across the country and they see this increase in overall reservation numbers continuing into the fall season."

Many people's summer vacations ran afoul of rainy weather this summer, so many people will take to the highway in their RVs to give it another try this fall and winter, said David Gorin, president of the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC). "With fall approaching, camping reservations for peak foliage seasons are strong in most parts of the country where people look forward to enjoying nature's show," he said. "We expect business to be about even with last year's strong performance."

Memories of last winter's fierce weather will send many RVers south to warmer climes this winter, Gorin predicted. "RV parks and campgrounds in the south are expecting a strong winter season as forecasters are predicting another cold winter throughout the northern parts of the U.S.," he said. "Last winter, northerners traveled south in record numbers to escape the deep freeze and with that in memory, many RVers are making reservations earlier and for longer stays."

There are nine million RVs on the road and an estimated 25 million Americans travel in RVs. RVIA is the national association representing nearly 500 manufacturer and component parts suppliers, who together produce 95 percent of all RVs manufactured in the United States.

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